

## FORT PECK TRIBES

Assiniboine & Sioux  
Testimonial Support for Senate Bill 342

Dear Chairman and committee members:

The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Language and Culture Department strongly support Senator Windy Boy and Senator Hansen with Senate Bill 342:

**"An Act establishing the Montana Indian Language Preservation Pilot Program."**

This legislative bill's mission statement supports Fort Peck People's Language and Culture Department efforts for *"Our youth to engage in the survival of our culture and ensure a thriving future for our people. We are devoted to the principle that without proficiency in language there can't be true cultural understanding, and, that to be truly successful, language speaking must deliver meaningful access to our culture"*

Our strong support for this bill comes in a manner that gives opportunity to support our progressive summer Immersion camps, where our younger generations are embraced in a holistic cultural approach in a safe environment where healthy cultural appropriateness is offered. We are relearning and sharing traditional knowledge and understandings from teachings of our Elder Nakona and Dakota people. The Nakona and Dakota Immersion environments provide complex and culturally based ways of teaching with emphasis on a holistic approach to: family, education, spiritual, cultural, health and societal issues.

My support is based from my personal understanding that when Native students learn a foreign language of another culture is not appropriate. What is appropriate and vital is speaking our Native languages and continuing life as a proud, dignified, and strong people just as our ancestors are. We recommend Native Language to be taken more serious by all and continue to stand up and strive encourage language to be spoken in all settings as it is the carrier of our **cultures**. We owe it to our ancestors to commemorate their suffering and their sacrifice by having the courage to stand up and speak the truth, to examine honestly events of our historical consciousness.

These teachings instill a sense of belonging and a role in society, both Native and Western. This is a natural understanding in Native thought our Languages and Cultures are to be embraced and supported. SB 342 has the strongest capability to help us Nakona and Dakota people and all other Native Montanans.

Thank You Senator Windy Boy for all your hard work, for it is leaders like yourself who truly bring the change we need in our Native communities. Pinamayaye/Pidamayaye (Thank You!)

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